it's as good). At least it's a step in the right direction when compared to "The Dark Side of the Spoon," and "Filth Pig". Although Ministry believe "Filth Pig" is their best album, "Animositosomina" is by far the best release from Ministry in years. If you are expecting another "Psalm 69" - don't look here. But if you are after something with driving guitars, distortion and want to relieve some anger you have towards the current world climate then this album will assist you. 6/10 - Biodef (1/10 - Dan)

The Mission - Aura [Metropolis] CD

The opening bars of "Aura" sound like something Sisters Of Mercy might have done circa "First and Last and Always" and shows they've abandoned their hippy influences and left the penchant for acoustic balladry they shared with All About Eve behind. However, while they've always been a technically proficient act, they've also been formulaic in their writing and that hasn't changed; "Evangeline" is the best example of this. By the chorus it's pure Mission, with Hussey's straining voice calling "Evangeline", the title of the only single off the album so far. It's catchy in the same way "Severina" and "Into the Blue" were, which is certain to sate Mission admirers. There are a couple of exceptions though: the lead guitar on "Happy" is straight out of the list of The Cure's worst pop songs, and "Lay Your Hands On Me" is a racing number with more energy than is usual for The Mission. In other tracks broader influences from alternative UK greats (especially U2) are more provocatively integrated into the sound. They've also experimented with vocal, drum, and guitar effects, which appear first on "(Slave to) Lust" and give a Tea Party type sound. For these reasons this album is certainly more interesting than "Masque" or "Neverland" - James Lowry

Moljebka Pulse - Sadalmelik [Cold Meat Industry] CD

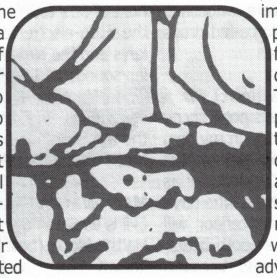
Moljebka pulse first appeared on the CMI sampler "Esthetiks Of Cruelty" and in '00 released their first album "Koan" which received a high level of attention. The CD is presented in a simple card folder with minimal information and at first I thought I'd paid full-price for a single. After I inserted the disc into the player, I was relieved to find I was wrong. This is one 72 minute track of experimental electronics and acoustic sounds, that are blended to create a dark ambient soundscape not unlike a cross between Lustmord and The Law-Rah Collective; the raw drones of Lustmord are folded over the electronics of Law-Rah to create the music that is Sadalmelik. This is a step away from the true dark ambient and industrial music that the CMI label has been built on and will perhaps be the start of another new path for the label. I should also mention that, like most CMI releases, this is another limited item of 1000 copies available on gold disc. If you like dark minimal electronics, grab it while you can. 8/10 - Mark Endacott

Mystral Tide - Whirlpool Of Souls [Zeitgeist] CD

This is a very interesting disc from Canberra's (previously, Tokyo's) Mystral Tide, a band featured on the "Dissonant Structures" DCD compilation of last year. This disc might be a year old but is well worth tracking down. The CD is largely instrumental and each track is unique with a common thread running throughout. What little vocals exist are unusually low in the mix, and are distorted and delayed, sounding very similar to the vocal treatments used sometimes by Velvet Acid Christ. Musically, most tracks seem to be based around a simple but repetitive monolithic bass sound with classically influenced piano forming a central feature. This is the main element which differentiates between this CD and a lot of EBM because while it is grounded in EBM, the piano gives the music a dramatic, orchestral feel. The best track on the album is "Force", starting off with a creepy synth line before a dense bass is lowered into the mix. There doesn't seem to be any percussion whatsoever in this track, which kind of reminds me of the theme music for the "Halloween" films. Listen to this track in a darkened room. This CD is definitely worth hearing. If you can't find the disc, there are some mp3s available for download at www.mystraltide.com. 8/10. - Jay

Navicon Torture Technologies - Power Romance [Cranial Fracture] CD

The ultra-rare "Power Romance", released originally by Annihilvs as a CD-R of only 40 copies has been re-released courtesy of Cranial Fracture. Power Romance is probably best defined as electronic dark-ambient, with moments of industrial noise. Sampled and manipulated vocals are combined with hypnotic layers of smooth electronics that remind me at times of Projekt artists and create a warm haven for the listener. Probably the closest 'noise' offerings on the release are "Spiritvs Capax" and "Scumbag Passion" which contain distorted rhythms, electronic noise and vocals. The former reminds me of the harsher work of Deutsch Nepal while the latter has the familiar wall of electronic noise. For those with an interest in 80's pop, "The Beautiful Ones" is a complete reworking of a prince tune rather than just a cover. Two bonus tracks are also included on this release that were not found on the original version. My one criticism of NTT is that since they release their material in such limited quantities, many will not have the good fortune to hear the quality of music that is available in such a release. Overall the CD is definitely worth the investment and given it's on an Australian label, you really have no excuses not to buy it. With any luck, the success of this release might spur Leech into releasing his material to a wider market. 7/10 - Mark Endacott



Negative Format - Cipher Method [Sector 9] CD

Negative Format were, along with Velvet Acid Christ, one of the first to combine the industrial, EBM and dance music elements together and have therefore influenced many artists. I approached this recording with some apprehension since last year's "Static" EP lacked the depth and complexity of their previous album "Distant Pulses". I don't think I would go so far as to say this is as good or better than "Distant Pulses" but "Cipher Method" does deliver. NF have definitely entered the trance realm but have kept their EBM roots by retaining dark and airy vocals and the ever-loved vocoder! I tend to stay away from trance music and Negative Format is one of the few exceptions (in english: Cipher Method is a good album). 7/10 - jarod

O Quam Tristis - Le Rituel Sacré [Palace Of Worms] CD

This 2nd album from France's O Quam Tristis (roughly translated from the Latin to mean 'O Such Sorrow') is trance-like in the most fundamental sense of the concept. Like most of this Italian label's releases, this certainly has elements of the medieval, but takes it in much more of an electronic, almost-EBM direction than another label traditionally would. Indeed, it is this remarkable mixture of the old with the new that leaves such an impression: dulcimer meets disco. The album is based primarily around traditional Latin texts like the Catholic Mass and the ethereal male and female vocals give it an "old school" credibility that distinguishes it from the myriad wanna-be's that seem to flock to this style of music. The more accessible highlights of the album include "Venerabiles Manus Suas" and "Gratias Agimus Tibi" while the only pitfalls appear to be that it would probably on first glance appeal only to those into the more ethereal/medieval darkwave genre. There is so much more here on offer that would appeal to fans of Delerium or even Enigma, but considering I am a fan of neither and adore this CD, I would suspect that O Quam Tristis are the ones the poor imitators look toward for inspiration. - Vagina Woolf

Ordo Rosarius Equilibrio - Make Love and War: The Wedlock of Roses [Cold Meat Industry] CD

Before Ordo Equilibrio changed their name, they first changed their style of music. The project once produced densely textured atmospherics, but now, like bands such as Death In June, Ostara and Strength Through Joy, they produce a neo-folk or dark-folk sound. The CD compositions include all the characteristic components of this style: the acoustic guitars, rhythmic bass drums and spoken or chanted vocals, together with familiar samples of military rallies, pornography, and children playing. The album lyrics and imagery include neo-folk preoccupations with uniforms, guns, Norse mythology and sexual fetishes. The lyrics use these components to give interesting treatments on nature, decay and power. This album places ORE alongside Death In June in respect to their provocative writing. ORE have the advantage of a better vocalist than most bands in this genre and in creating music that is not self-consciously discordant they are more accessible than some of their contemporaries. Only one track, "Liebe Utopia/On Weaves Of Silken Carnage", is truly exceptional for its clever mechanical beat and Mirbeau-like lyrics. This is an excellent example of this style of music; not outstandingly innovative, but arranged well, and a fine introduction to the genre. James Lowry - 7/10

Placebo - Sleeping With Ghosts [Hut] CD

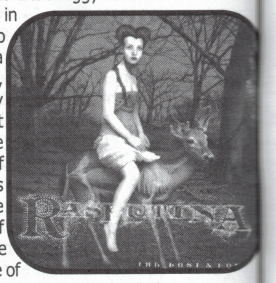
Placebo have lived up to their fans expectations following the rather average "Black Market Music" with an album that is both mature and yet as explosively angry as anything they've ever done before. The album swings from one mood extreme to the other and there's no need to skip any tracks here. The slower tracks really make the album; the title track is a beautiful slice of melancholia with Molko's fragile voice delicately floating above a high-pitched guitar in a simple yet haunting tune. "Protect Me From What I Want" is slightly more aggressive while "Special Needs" is the opposite. The first single "The Bitter End" is the pick of the faster tracks with Molko screaming almost indecipherable platitudes as guitars crash over a chugging baseline in a frenzied climax of drumming. "This Picture" and "English Summer Rain" feature Placebo's traditional "swaggering indifferent" style that you can't help but be charmed by. Producer Jim Abiss (The Music, DJ Shadow) has done some absolutely flawless mixing and Molko has coaxed some truly extraordinary sounds from his guitar. I wasn't really a fan of Placebo before this, but now I've been converted and that takes effort! 8/10 - Dan

Project Pitchfork - View From A Throne [Metropolis] CDEP

There's something romantic about a unique 5 track release. It's not quite an EP and not a single from an album. Therein lies personality, as if the band is tapping you on the shoulder and whispering in your ear "here's a special something we've done just for you". Romantic notions aside, Project Pitchfork deliver a good quality CD with a sound that is similiar to their latest album "Inferno" (in fact, "Inferno", "View From A Throne" and "Trialog" is part of a trilogy concept). The title track is a flowingly warm and introspective piece and the CD continues to give the range of Project Pitchfork music and emotions. This is not the best intro to the band and not strictly for fans either. It's also obvious that this single wasn't thrown together at the last minute. You will struggle to find club material here because this is quality Project Pitchfork doing music which is from the heart and not the dollars (or Euros as the case may be). 8/10 - jarod

Rasputina - The Lost and Found: 2nd Edition [RPM] CDEP

Although it's easy to discount them as novelties quirkypop sweethearts Rasputina and Melora Creager's sassy-cello-&-cute-vocals, it has to be said that this is the best bloody covers collection in the history of anything. There are bong-wielding classics here from Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin that are entertaining to the degree that they are simply so much better than the ludicrously beatified originals. There is "All Tomorrow's Parties" by Velvet Underground (perhaps the most ceaselessly ballsed-up cover of all time, butchered by everyone from Apoptygma Berzerk to Japan) which has been gracefully rescued in a whirlwind of simple strings and girly vocals. Melora's twisted cover of "This Little Piggy" sounds like it was conceived in a 20's speakeasy to Betty Boop and a bottle of moonshine, and would probably be the highlight if it wasn't for the remarkable cover of Marilyn Manson's "Tourniquet". While certainly not a fan of the original, I believe this cover is truly one of the best goth-pop songs ever recorded. Rasputina have toured with MM in the past and perhaps saw something in the over-hyped, over-made blandoids that hadn't occurred to me. I'd give this CD a 10/10 if I wasn't so miffed about them re-releasing it with 2 extra tracks, pooh-poohing those of us who coughed up for it when we thought it was a one-off web-only treat . Not that I'm bitter. - Alexandra H-N



Razed In Black - Damaged [Cleopatra] CD

This is thoroughly raucous, up-beat, danceable fun at its best. However it doesn't end there & comes with the delicious added extra of a rather sweet yet melancholic offering or two. Let's also not fail to mention those wonderfully tormented